

**Neighborhood Ten Study
Committee Meeting # 9
June 23, 2005**

Committee members present: Henry Lukas, Bill Forster, Sandra Uytterhoeven, Joshua Rowland, Peter Sturges, John Moukaud, Chip Strang, Primo Vannicelli

Staff present: Elaine Thorne, Taha Jennings

Discussion:

The Study Committee continued discussions on the preliminary recommendations regarding land use, urban design and zoning, housing, and transportation, in the context of the results of the public meeting, which took place on June 11. There was also some discussion on the process for creating the final list of study recommendations.

Transportation Issues

Traffic enforcement was noted as a key concern and committee members felt that enforcement of traffic rules seemed lax in the neighborhood. Someone also pointed out that the court system is often backed up.

The Committee generally agreed that many of the concerns from the neighborhood involved traffic issues. There was some discussion on how best to deal with the more specific traffic issues in the context of the Neighborhood Ten Study recommendations. Someone suggested that it may be effective to differentiate between specific “housekeeping” traffic issues and the more general traffic concerns of the neighborhood, understanding that addressing the general concerns would deal with many of the more specific issues.

Another issue discussed by the committee was regarding intergovernmental coordination of state owned land and roads, specifically regarding maintenance and enforcement, queuing problems at intersections, and enforcement of speeding and other traffic violations.

Development in Neighborhood

The Committee agreed that there should be advance notice for new developments in the neighborhood. One committee member added that it seems that almost every new development in the City is a surprise for the neighbors that are affected by it. Another committee member asked how much public notice is required for new developments and if it what is required is sufficient? Someone suggested a moratorium on development in order to give residents an opportunity to air concerns, or, imposing tougher standards for new development to take place. It was noted that without proper zoning in place, residents lacked the power to have a meaningful influence on what will happen in the neighborhood. There was a question about the public process for proposed developments that are less than 50,000 square feet, and in particular, what happens if a development is carried out in phases, each less than 50,000 square feet.

Someone suggested that it seems residential districts in Neighborhood Ten are zoned according to the structures that currently exist and that the same practice should be applied to commercial districts in the neighborhood.

On the contrary, another Committee member felt development restrictions in Cambridge are more stringent than other nearby areas, and that it is important to preserve a balance between property owner's rights, and needs of the abutters. Also, in some instances, residents and developers won't agree on every point, and the neighborhood will not always get everything they want. Someone pointed out that developers have an incentive to get community support before a project is underway.

There was some concern expressed about the Star Market Supermarket site, particularly the type of public process, if any, which would accompany redevelopment of the site. There was a feeling that a mixed-use development would be the most appropriate at the location.

Two questions were posed by a committee member: Is Neighborhood Ten as dense as residents want it? And, is the zoning currently in place appropriate for the commercial areas of the neighborhood?

Mount Auburn Hospital

A committee member asked if downzoning is appropriate for the Mount Auburn Hospital site, and whether that would help to address quality of life issues, expansion into the neighborhood, effects on the river, and traffic impacts. Someone suggested requiring an environmental impact statement like document for the hospital

Another committee member stated that not enough is known about the hospital to determine if downzoning makes sense for the site. It was noted that Mount Auburn Hospital is a local rather than a regional facility. Someone stated that constant ambulance activity and additional curb cuts are not desired in the area.

It was also noted that exploring options for connections to Memorial Drive and or Gerry's Landing would require coordination with the State.

Process

There was some committee discussion on the process of developing, agreeing to, and finalizing the recommendations of the Study Committee that will be a part of the Neighborhood Study. Someone asked about how to achieve closure on the recommendations and if it was necessary to vote on them. Another committee member felt that having an evolving list of recommendations seemed effective.

Staff noted that the current method involved staff drafting the initial wording of recommendations based on the discussions, comments and suggestions of the Study Committee. The Committee then will have an opportunity to review the draft recommendations, and discuss anything that is felt should be changed, added, or deleted. The goal is for everyone on the Study Committee to, at the very least, be comfortable with the all of recommendations before they are finalized.